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ABSTRACT

University of California Santa Barbara students were surveyed in 1996 to learn about student life and culture in the 1990s. Fifty-five percent of 815 randomly selected undergraduates responded to a mail survey. Responses were grouped according to students' race, gender, and social class. Reasons identified for attending college included: to receive preprofessional or precareer training, to make more money, and to develop self-knowledge. Findings support the widespread belief that young people are relatively anxious about their future life chances. Differences in social practices and activities of students were found for different racial, ethnic, and gender categories. Students reported on their use of alcohol and drugs and the frequency of attending large parties at private homes. Information was also obtained on the frequency of students' interactions with faculty about academic matters, and the frequency of attending cultural events. The data, which include 4 tables and 10 figures, suggest that students from working class and lower income families, minorities, and those who are the first in the family to attend college are less uncertain than their upper middle class peers about the value of a college education. Additional findings and policy implications are considered. (Contains 20 references and 18 endnotes.) (SW)

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COLLEGE STUDENTS IN THE NINETIES: report on a project in progress

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This paper was presented at the annual meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education held in Albuquerque, New Mexico, November 6-9, 1997. This paper was reviewed by ASHE and was judged to be of high quality and of interest to others concerned with higher education. It has therefore been selected to be included in the ERIC collection of ASHE conference papers.

COLLEGE STUDENTS IN THE NINETIES: report on a project in progress

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February 1998

STUDYING STUDENTS' WORLDS[1]

In the 1940s, 50s, and 60s, many of the leading sociologists and social scientists devoted considerable time to studying and writing about American college students. One can't help but be impressed by the names of those who wrote significant books about students during those years. Theodore Newcomb, Nevitt Sanford, Seymour Martin Lipset, James Coleman, David Riesman, Christopher Jencks, Talcott Parsons, Howard Becker, Rose Goldsen, Martin Trow—all of these were authors of major empirical work. All did such research *before* the explosion of student protest—once such protest emerged, the amount of empirical study, theoretical analysis and sheer speculation about students increased exponentially.[1]

Most of the pre-protest research was aimed at measuring the effects of college on students. The interest of these social scientists was not in measuring what students learned from the formal curriculum (an entire separate research tradition grew up around that topic). Rather, it was to see how going to college did or did not affect what might be called the *character* of those who attended; indeed, this research embodied the hope (shared by many academics) that the expansion of higher education might help foster a more 'liberal' cultural and political climate. A central question was whether students, largely drawn from relatively conservative upper and middle class families, became more tolerant of difference, more supportive of free expression, learned to question authority (or at least to tolerate those who did), developed some understanding of the plight of the less privileged, became resistant to temptations to suppress ideas and expressions that were offensive, and developed some capacity to appreciate non-pecuniary goals and values. Some of the studies were more explicitly political partisan—measuring the extent to which students from conservative background (the great majority) moved away from the political identities their parents had instilled and toward the left.

This research found that that such changes did occur—but not universally. A key finding of this research was that the effects of college on the social outlook of students were mediated by the 'culture' of the students themselves: student peer groups were found to be the primary sites for socialization as well as socializing (and therefore filtered the attempts by faculty to influence student development).

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[1] This manuscript is a revised version of a paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Association for the Study of Higher Education, Albuquerque, in 1997. For their various kinds of invaluable support, we thank the Joseph & Helen Pollock Foundation; the University of California Santa Barbara (UCSB) Dean of Social Sciences, Don Zimmerman; the UCSB Academic Senate; the UCSB Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, Michael Young; the UCSB Vice Chancellor Budget & Planning, Robert Kunz and the UCSB Director of Institutional Research, Dennis Hengstler. The opinions expressed herein represent those of the authors only. Please address all comments to Professor Scott L. Thomas, Department of Educational Administration, University of Hawaii at Manoa, 1776 University Ave., Honolulu, HI 96822, email: scthomas@hawaii.edu+++

AMERICAN STUDENTS' CULTURE—A CAPSULE HISTORY

American colleges were created to 'educate' the next generation of elites. For most of their history, their primary and dominant clients were rich WASP males, although from the late 19th century on, public universities and some elite colleges were likely to admit handfuls of 'outsiders'—i.e. Catholics, Jews, other non-whites, and some who were 'needy'. Women began entering higher education in some numbers in the decades after the Civil War. American political, educational and business leaders acknowledged that, insofar as undergraduate college campuses were central training grounds for their replacements, some opportunity for upward movement of those of disadvantaged origin was desirable—provided that the upwardly mobile were appropriately socialized.

Helen L. Horowitz' book *Campus Life* provides a sociologically informed and insightful history of the evolution of 'student culture'. The initial, and for years the dominant, student subculture was constituted by rich WASP males. From the outset, these student 'insiders' organized themselves to resist the academic demands of the faculty and to protect their pleasure-seeking activity from excessive control by college and civic policing efforts. Such organization was expressed through fraternities and other kinds of secret and usually exclusive clubs, which operated to promote a climate in which hedonism and extracurricular play and service was fostered and valued, while interest in the scholarly and the intellectual was disdained. The incorporation of this organized subculture as a regular feature of the institutional life of the college (rather than efforts to disperse it) made sense so long as colleges were understood to be frameworks for 'character' formation for elite youth (rather than primarily as places for training scholars and scientists). Legitimating fraternities provided for the orderly housing of young men who would otherwise be much harder to control—even if it required the tacit acceptance by the institution of racism, anti-Semitism, anti-intellectualism, the objectification of women, cheating, and a variety of other unpleasant practices."

But the presence of some 'outsiders' in the student body, and the fact that some number of students of insider background were repelled by the 'collegiate'/fraternity world, resulted in the formation of alternative subcultural frameworks. There were, on the one hand, a minority of students who identified with scholarship and the world of ideas, and who identified with the faculty rather than peers (and therefore were not typically likely to organize a peer 'subculture'). Intellectual engagement of a different kind was collectively expressed by varieties of 'bohemian' or 'rebellious' campus groups–these often felt themselves to be at war with the 'Greeks' and what they represented, and also with the stodgy conservatism or other-worldliness of the faculty. Thus much of the history of student life can be read as a product of the struggle between collegiate and rebellious or bohemian subcultures. This cleavage was based to some extent on class (although the rebels were attractive to some upper class youths as well as to social outsiders).

These two subcultural formations were important for shaping the identity of American elites before the Depression: if you went to a top college and were in a fraternity, you learned how to be the kind of person who would smoothly move into a life of making and managing money or exercising political power in behalf of business values; while at the

same school having been a rebel made you more likely to want to be a writer, an artist, a journalist, a maverick professional or politician—carrying on for the rest of one's life the cultural styles and tastes and antagonisms one had taken on in frat houses or coffee houses of one's college days.

As Horowitz describes, however, by the 1930s, the college scene was becoming more varied. A large wave of second generation Jewish youth had begun to enter college, and in some schools (notably CCNY) they were dominant; while offspring of other immigrant groups and of working class origin were also increasing in number. The Depression itself certainly put a damper on the frivolity of both the collegiate and bohemian subcultures. Still, most privileged youth continued to gravitate to social worlds that would shield them from the 'world of ideas' and reinforce and nurture the social outlook to which they had been born. Meanwhile, the ranks of students who worked hard on their studies grew—largely these were the 2nd generation immigrant and working class kids, for whom doing well in school was now seen as necessary if one was to escape from ghetto, slum and factory. These students were not only or even primarily concerned about their grades, but about acquiring the knowledge, the skills, the personal style that would enable them to be acceptable to and perhaps even welcomed into professional, intellectual or managerial worlds. Many had to work while going to school; the sacrifices required to attend further reinforced their seriousness as students. Many of these, at the same time, were attracted by the burgeoning of political consciousness on campus. Earlier cultural rebellion was now being mixed with or replaced by a concern with the seeming collapse of capitalism, the rise of fascism, and support for the newly explosive labor movement.

The 1930s generation of student outsiders did not, of course, end up allying with a revolutionary working class. Instead, their arrival helped to diversify the ranks of the national leadership class, and signaled the post-war emergence of higher education as the primary route to upward mobility. After the war a rapidly expanding system of mass higher education aimed not only to socialize those destined for the top, but at creating a vast professional, managerial and service class—a 'new' middle class.

In the immediate post war world, masses of war veterans thronged the public universities. By all accounts, this influx led to perhaps the largest group of 'serious' students yet seen in higher education. Their seriousness was certainly about striving—resembling in even more obviously instrumental ways the perspective of pre-war 2nd generation students. The GI Bill enabled the growth of public higher education, and was a key reason for the institutionalization of the college as the primary route to advancement. Meanwhile, however, the 'collegiate-Greek' subculture also burgeoned in the 50s—carrying on the tradition of resisting the academic and defending the hedonistic, 'social' dimension of the undergraduate experience and extending this tradition to many offspring of the expanding newly affluent middle class. A new bohemianism also flourished in those years, attracting some of the veterans, fueled by national media fascination with the 'beat' generation, and by the growing number of graduate students and of faculty who had themselves come out of earlier bohemian generations. The 1950s were notorious as a time of political disaffiliation and fearful avoidance of public protest; in that climate the 'collegiate' was taken to be once again the dominant campus subculture. Such depictions of campus life

often missed the growing subterranean subculture of cultural protest at many elite and large schools.

One way to describe student life in the 1960s is to say that bohemian rebellion, for the first time, triumphed over the collegiate subculture. By the end of that decade, students seemed more culturally unified than they had ever been, and their shared symbols and practices expressed manifest antagonism toward 'middle class values', conventional tastes, striving for 'success'. Hedonism was pervasive, but expressed rebelliously; rather than adopting the forms of pleasure appropriate to mainstream adulthood (i.e. alcohol, tobacco, conventional sex, spectator sports, fast cars, etc.), 1960s youth culture promoted distinctly alternative tastes (grass, acid, polymorphous perversity, music festivals, VW vans, etc.) Waves of political protest attracted ever growing thousands of students; even if only a small percent of students were committed activists, these, by the late 1960s, were often the pace-setters of student culture. And, for a brief moment, after Kent State, the majority of students in the country identified with the 'Movement'.[iii]

The spread and impact of such rebellion had not been anticipated in any of the vast literature on student attitudes that had accumulated by the 1960s. Moreover, the demographic composition of the vanguard of 1960s protest and counterculture was also surprising—since it was disproportionately made up of sons and daughters of elite or at least affluent families, who attended the most prestigious campuses, and had records of solid academic and extracurricular achievement. The leaders of 1960s rebellion were not outsiders to academic life (indeed they typically were the offspring of parents who themselves had college degrees), and they were not 'malintegrated'.[iv]

The shift toward rebellion among students in the 1960s was 'overdetermined'. It had much to do with 'affluence'—i.e., the pervasive belief that problems of scarcity were being superseded, that college graduates would not have difficulties finding remunerative vocations, and that the central problems facing them were to find ways of life that would be 'fulfilling' and 'meaningful'. Many students were raised by parents who themselves articulated such concerns, who expected their offspring to capitalize on their potential for making a difference in the world, and for living distinctive and fulfilling lives. Such aspirations, however, came into sharp conflict with certain social realities—most notably the war and the draft, but also with the bureaucratization of work for the highly educated. So there was a widespread sense among the young that their hopes for fulfillment were threatened –immediately by the war and by escalating social conflict; in the longer term by the encroachment of authoritarian institutions. Finally, the symbols and styles created in the counterculture were popularized by mass media eagerly using them to shape and control a rapidly growing youth market. Rebellious images resonated with youth already emotionally primed to question authority; media provided resources for collective identity that enabled the growth of collective consciousness and mass action among youth on an unprecedented scale.[v]

The dominance of the rebellious counterculture on campuses receded during the 1970s. Sixties' era beliefs about the permanence of affluence and endless growth gave way to evidence of the ways in which economic growth could be both malignant and less certain. Increasingly, the news reported threats to youthful confidence about the future: inflation,

energy crisis, state fiscal crisis, global competitiveness, declining public budgets, declining job opportunities for the educated. Observers noted a shift in the student climate—a growing concern about life chances created a mood that was becoming more self-centered, and instrumentalist, than the prevailing climate in the 1960s. Moreover, the ending of the draft and the war removed students' most important shared threat. Movement activism shifted off campus or was channeled into diverse causes: feminism, environmentalism, ethnic identity struggles, gay liberation—further fragmenting student culture.

Indeed, in the period since the 1960s, no simple mapping of student cultures has been possible. The student population itself continued to both grow and diversify racially and ethnically. Vocationalist preoccupations increasingly drew students toward individualized focus on maintaining their grades (and, accordingly, the classic collegiate disdain for academic 'grinds' disappeared from student discourse). Participation in extracurricular activity gradually declined, and the perennial pre-1960s warfare between Greeks and intellectual rebels no longer defined student life. Greek organizations did grow after their 1960s era decline, but have never regained their old attractiveness or influence.[vi]

Still, in the 1970s and 1980s, students continued to seek and express collective identities and some distinct subcultural formations were noticeable. The classic 'collegiate' identity was often identifiable in 'preppy' appearance and yuppie taste, and in hearty party get-drunk-quick beer bashes that were often held in (but not necessarily restricted to) frat houses. Neo-bohemianism had several variant subcultures: new 'punk', 'hard-core' styles and tastes in music and dress, 'deadheads' and other forms of 1960s-nostalgia, 'raves' and other collective uses of psychedelic music and drugs. The influx of African-American, Latino/Chicano and Asian-American students spawned a host of ethnic organizations, including fraternities and sororities, but also a variety of cultural, political and professional groups, embedded in social worlds of minority students and creating a new and often dynamic campus leadership force at many schools. Meanwhile, activist identity was channeled into a host of feminist projects—advancing both feminist politics and service to the needs of women. Alongside these arose 'out' gay/lesbian/bisexual campus subcultures, advocacy of the rights and needs of disabled students, and other struggles for recognition. Environmentalist activists formed still another network and sometimes a full-fledged subculture—'granola-heads' trying to establish sustainable lifestyles, promote recycling and other environmentally sound institutional policies, etc. Ideologically left and right student groups rose and fell during the 1970s and 1980s—and sometimes were able to lead sizable mass protests, as in the anti-apartheid 'divestment' campaigns of the mid-1980s, and the widespread protests against the Persian Gulf incursion in the Fall and Winter of 1990.

The majority of students, however, seemed identified only marginally with these nodes of collective consciousness and action. It was hard to read this majority because, in the 1970s and after, there was a marked absence of systematic survey research and ethnography on student attitudes and culture. Still, it was plausible to claim that, as the 1970s turned into the 1980s, students at most institutions saw their time in college as primarily a preparation for vocation or career, and, as a result, gave priority to efforts to

ensure the marketability of their transcripts and resumes. Many instructors remember the early 1980s as a time when students were surprisingly attentive in lectures (and Doonesbury cartoons mocked the prevailing tendency to take down everything teacher said), captive, if not slavish, audiences, driven, more than earlier generations, by the grade quest.

The campus climate seemed to change, again, in the later 1980s (perhaps a key event was the stock market crash of 1987, which seemed to dash the belief that one could start earning fantastic salaries right out of college if one was willing to work in the financial sector). College administrators began to openly worry about the 'decline in campus community' (remembering a golden past which perhaps never had existed). Their worries were largely the result of an increasing number of racial incidents on campus—e.g. racist performances by fraternities, minority students' collective distress at incidents interpreted as 'racial harassment', etc. Efforts by student personnel administrators to counter such incidents by adopting such measures as 'hate speech codes', and protests by minority students at alleged racism of faculty and fellow students provoked an outpouring of conservative commentary attacking 'political correctness' on campus. This literature, often recounting the same set of stories, described a campus climate in which freedom of speech was in dire danger from the combined effect of racial and sexual harassment disciplinings, students' zealous efforts to censor faculty and fellow students, and the steady indoctrination by 'tenured radicals' of young minds with 'multiculturalism', 'post-structuralism' and 'post-modernism' (i.e. a new set of doctrines that undermined the legitimacy of Western civilization and the moral foundations of society). Soon, media were depicting the campuses as battlegrounds in one or more culture wars—amongst racially polarized student groups and between an intolerantly liberal faculty consensus heroically resisted by a minority of right-thinking faculty and students.

Given the paucity of systematic research on students and student life, it is hard to evaluate these characterizations and their applicability to past or present reality. Our own sense, based largely on our experience at the University of California, is that the alleged polarizations of student life around race (and gender and sexuality) were never as sharp nor as simple as these depictions made them out to be. Nor has there been a continuing climate, either among students or in the institution as a whole, in which freedom of expression was in grave danger—although efforts to restrict or discipline speech deemed offensive were certainly not rare.

Beneath all the publicity about 'political correctness' however were other student behaviors that disturbed faculty and administrators, even if they received much less media attention. These might be summarized by saying that, in the early 1990s, there was an apparent decline in student 'discipline'. Administrators began decrying an increase in alcohol abuse, and in violence (sexual and otherwise) associated with heavy drinking scenes in both the streets of the student community (Halloween being a notorious peak period for this in Santa Barbara), in house parties, and in the residence halls. Faculty began to talk about a certain unruliness in large lectures—students coming late, leaving early, talking, and, indeed, not attending at all. The captive audience of the 1980s seemed to have disappeared, and in its place an unprecedented sense of distance between faculty

and students, especially in the big lecture settings (which were typical of 'general education' courses).

At UC Santa Barbara, faculty members had heard that average SAT scores for newly admitted students had declined in the late 1980s; it didn't take long before this supposed decline in the 'quality' of the student body was identified, in the faculty culture, as the cause of the apparent decline in student academic motivation. Indeed, a special committee was soon appointed to improve recruitment of students of 'higher quality'. Of course, if there were a decline in motivation (and, again, the absence of empirical data makes it hard to be certain), it was most unlikely that it would be somehow related to differences in SAT averages—for the decline in those scores was hardly dramatic nor sufficient to account for the behaviors being worried about. Indeed, there appeared to us to be a pressing need for some systematic inquiry into the students' own beliefs, expectations and culture—since the faculty's anxieties and speculations suggested a considerable breakdown in mutual understanding.

STUDENTS IN THE NINETIES—A RESEARCH PROJECT[vii]

In 1995, we began such a systematic study. Our hope was to produce some findings at UC Santa Barbara that would be sufficiently intriguing—and some research tools that would be sufficiently exportable—to stimulate some national data gathering about student life, culture and attitudes in this period—and thereby to begin to fill the current vacuum of knowledge and understanding (and resulting misrepresentation) of today's students. Worries about declining academic motivation, about the withdrawal of many students from interest in either the public sphere or the life of the mind, are hardly unique to California—they are in fact being nationally expressed.[viii]

Our initial data gatherings were done in spring 1996. We mailed a survey questionnaire to 815 randomly selected UC Santa Barbara undergraduates, over-sampling African-American and Latino/Chicano students. Items for this were largely designed to enable comparison of this sample with data from UC Santa Barbara's past, and from various national surveys (also largely in the past but including the ongoing annual surveys of college freshmen done by the Higher Education Research Institute at UC Los Angeles).[ix] The survey effort yielded a response rate of 55%. Females were over-represented in the final sample (62% v 52% population). Also over-represented in the sample were African-American and Latino/Chicano students (8.7% & 17.3% v. 2.7% and 11.8% respectively) while Asian-American students were somewhat under-represented (9.9% v.16.5% campus population). Almost 13% of respondents to the survey identified with multi-racial backgrounds.

At the same time, we embarked on a kind of ethnographic inquiry.[x] Using non-probabilistic snowball sampling techniques, we collected over 80 diaries from a range of undergraduates. These students kept a detailed record, in the form of a diary, of their daily activity for a two week period. The diaries were then used to frame interviews with each diarist about the details of their daily practices, priorities and interactions. A separate interview with each of these respondents focused on issues of identity and personal development.[xi]

Analysis of all of these materials is now in process. But at an early stage of examination, some interesting—and perhaps important—findings seem worth sharing. In what follows, we draw primarily on results of the survey we did in spring, 1996 (though our impressions of the diary-interview materials support the story we sketch here). That story involves a set of findings about how race, ethnicity, class and gender relate to academic and intellectual engagement, and to students' purposes and priorities during their time in college.

Orientation toward college

It has been widely observed that more students today, compared with ever before, say they are going to college for 'economic' reasons above all others.[xii] This broader trend is also evidenced in our data in several ways—the most notable of which is that more than 50% of UCSB students in our sample strongly agree or agree with the statement that "[t]he *chief* benefit of a college education is that it increases one's earning power". Table 1 contains student rankings of a series of reasons for going to college. In this ranking, some 27% of respondents identify professional/vocational preparation as their first reason (over 50% of students list this as their first or second reason for attending college).

Table 1. Percent indicating as primary reason for attending college by race (in order of importance)

	ALL	WHITE	BLACK	HISPANIC	ASIAN	OTHER
To receive pre-professional or pre-career training	26.8%	23.0%	19.4%	27.9%	45.7%	30.8%
To make more money	18.5%	14.8%	18.2%	21.5%	16.2%	22.2%
To develop self knowledge in order to better understand and perhaps deal with your own emotions, perceptions, and sensitivities.	18.0%	20.9%	15.2%	14.9%	12.8%	16.7%
To pursue knowledge for its own sake.	16.4%	13.2%	12.9%	20.0%	8.8%	30.2%
To better understand the society and world you live in.	13.0%	9.4%	26.5%	11.9%	10.8%	20.4%
Because your being pressured by your parents or the standards of society to obtain a college education.	6.5%	6.2%	0.0%	8.3%	7.3%	8.6%

Almost 20% of students responding indicated that their primary motivation for attending college was simply "[t]o make more money" (over 40% of respondents listed this as one of their top two choices). A significant segment of the student body lists more 'intrinsic' reasons; 13% - 18% of the total sample include at least one of the following as their primary motivation: 'to develop self-knowledge', 'to better understand the society and world', 'to pursue knowledge for its own sake'. As always, then, students can be classified as 'instrumentally/ vocationally' or 'intrinsically' motivated, but today, even at a relatively affluent and selective residential college like the UC Santa Barbara, the instrumentalist perspective appears to prevail far more than it might have 20-30 years ago, and appears to prevail across racial/ethnic lines.

Uncertainty about economic and professional futures

There is evidence in our survey supporting the widespread belief that young people today are relatively anxious about their future life chances. For example, table 2 shows that over two-thirds of the sample say that they will have to work harder than their parents to achieve a comparable standard of living and 80% say that they will have great or some difficulty finding a job 'that is at all suited' to them.

Table 2. Perception of future opportunities (by race)

	ALL	WHITE	BLACK	HISPANIC	ASIAN	OTHER
Expect some or great difficulty in finding a job that is at all suited to you	80.4%	81.8%	77.2%	71.8%	90.2%	80.4%
Very concerned about finding a meaningful career	49.6%	47.1%	45.7%	50.7%	55.0%	56.1%
Chances of success in life worse or much worse than parents' generation	27.9%	35.7%	24.2%	8.7%	16.2%	33.9%
Will have to work harder or much harder than parents' generation	70.2%	71.7%	84.4%	58.0%	62.5%	77.7%

This table and the next indicate that the much remarked tendency of 'generation Xers' to believe that they will have a hard time equaling or surpassing their parents' status is, logically enough, largely found among upper status youth (our data indicate that minority students and students who identify as 'lower' or 'working' class are relatively less likely to see their future life chances as worse or more difficult than that of their parents' generation). Unfortunately, none of the items we used in this survey, all of which are phrased ambiguously, are adequate for assessing the degree of anxiety about future opportunities that may be present in various sectors of the student body.

Table 3. Perception of future opportunities (by social class background)

	ALL	LOWER	WORKING	MIDDLE	UPPER
Expect some or great difficulty in finding a job that is at all suited to you	79.8%	85.7%	76.9%	81.7%	78.4%
Very concerned about finding a meaningful career	49.8%	40.9%	55.7%	50.0%	37.8%
Chances of success in life worse or much worse than parents' generation	27.9%	4.8%	11.0%	34.6%	36.2%
Will have to work harder or much harder than parents' generation	70.7%	59.1%	65.1%	72.7%	77.2%

But these data do seem to indicate that students from all class backgrounds are less than sanguine about their future occupational and career interests.

Social activity & integration

There are striking differences in the social practices and activities of students in different racial, ethnic and gender categories. The most startling is that white students (especially

males) report far higher rates of alcohol and drug use than do African-American, Latino/Chicano or Asian-American students.[xiii] Table 4 shows that white males report that on average they binge drink (3 or more drinks in one sitting[xiv]) 8 times a month, while African-American and Latino/Chicano males report they do this an average of 4.5 times a month. Virtually all of the students who reported heavy drinking on a very frequent basis (more than 8 times a month) were white males. Consistent with broader national patterns, white females are less heavy drinkers than white males on average—but their averages are higher than those of non-white males. The pattern is similar for self-reported use of drugs. Indeed, in general, white students report considerably higher frequency of attendance at 'large private parties' and similar social practices.

Table 4. Alcohol, drug use, and party attendance (by race and sex)

	ALL		WHITE		BLACK & HISPANIC		ASIAN	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Percent reporting use of alcohol	86.7%	75.1%	91.8%	85.8%	84.8%	65.8%	54.6%	48.3%
Binge drinking episodes per month	6.5	3.6	8.0	4.7	4.5	2.1	2.5	1.7
Percent reporting drug use	37.0%	25.6%	47.1%	32.5%	30.3%	17.8%	0.0%	13.8%
Very frequently or frequently attend large parties at private homes	40.0%	26.1%	49.4%	36.5%	25.8%	17.1%	9.1%	14.3%

More advantaged students, defined by racial/ethnic background, tend to be more 'hedonistic'—defined in terms of alcohol and drug use and 'partying'. To examine the relationship between 'partying' and social advantage more closely, we devised an 'adversity' scale (defined in terms of indicators such as: lack of financial support from parents; responsibility for care of a family member; parents' earning less than $30,000/year; self-identification as lower class; and first-generation college student). Students in the lowest category of adversity (14% of the sample) are free from any of these 'burdens' or 'disadvantages.'

Figure 1. Proportion of students reporting alcohol use (by adversity status)

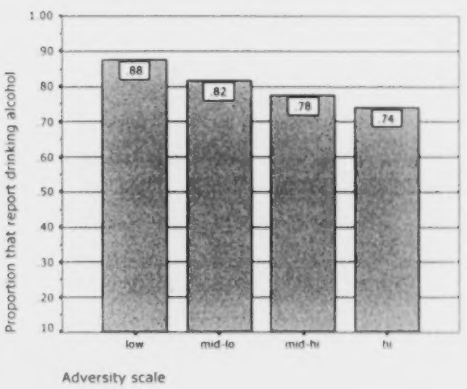
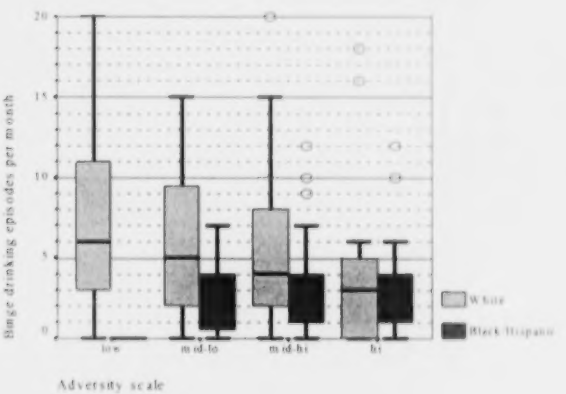


Figure 2. Frequency of binge drinking episodes (by adversity status and race)[xv]



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The second and third adversity categories (labeled 'mid-lo' and 'mid-hi') are comprised of students reporting 1 or 2 of these characteristics (35% and 37% of the sample respectively). Finally, students in the highest adversity category report 3 or 4 of the above listed characteristics (14% of the sample). The proportion of students, by adversity category, reporting alcohol use and the distribution of the frequency binge drinking are reported in figures 1 and 2 respectively.

Drinking and drug use data reported in table 4 are matched by students' reports on their social lives: about half of white males, and about a third of white women say they very frequently or often attend 'large parties at private homes including fraternities and sororities".[xvi] More than half of African-American and Latino/Chicano students (male and female) say they 'rarely' participate in such parties—and more than two-thirds of Asian-American students in our sample report this (not shown in table 4). Apparently UC Santa Barbara's reputation as a 'party school'[xvii] refers mainly to the practices of white students, particularly those in the most advantaged portion of the white student population.

Intellectual & cultural activity

We asked students how often they attended "'cultural' events such as museums, film series or theater." Some 27% - 32% of non-white students report they very frequently or often attend. Only about 14% of white males attend to the same degree (21% of white women report similar rates of cultural activity; indeed fully 42% of white males say they rarely go to such events). An index of 'intellectual and cultural activity' was constructed to capture the degree to which respondents report participating in such activities as visiting the campus museum, attending campus lectures, reading 'serious' literature (not for a class), etc. (figures 3 and 4). Our examination of this index suggests that white males exhibit lower levels of intellectual and cultural activity than black and Chicano males, and women of all other groups.

Figure 3. Level of cultural & intellectual activity by adversity status (all students)

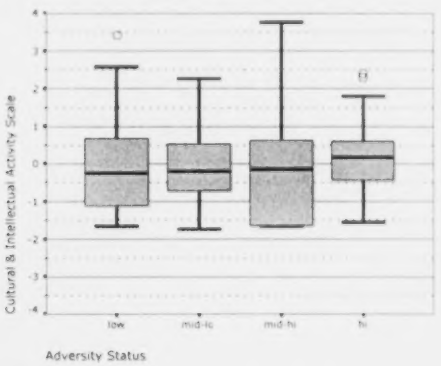
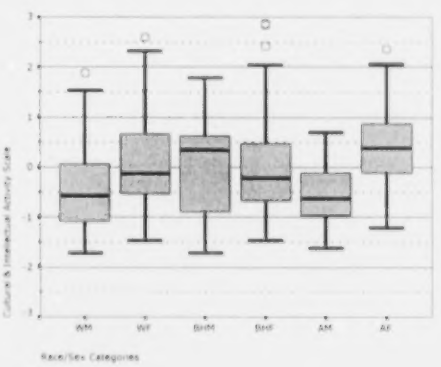


Figure 4. Level of cultural & intellectual activity by race & sex



Volunteerism

Only about 6% of white males say that they often or very frequently participate in volunteer community or social service (about 14% of white females do this)—whereas some 20% of African-American and Latino/Chicano students claim this level of volunteer

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activity (see figure 5). In another measure of this, depicted in figure 6 the median number of hours per week that white males report they have done volunteer or internship work during the past year is about 3. The comparable figure for African-American and Latino/Chicano males was 8 (the number of Asian-American males responding to this item was quite low and should therefore not be interpreted in relation to the other categories).

Figure 5. Proportion volunteering frequently or very frequently (by race & sex)

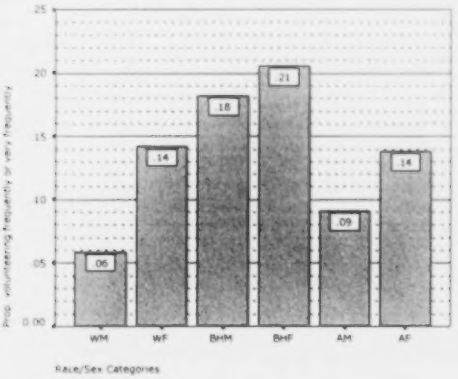
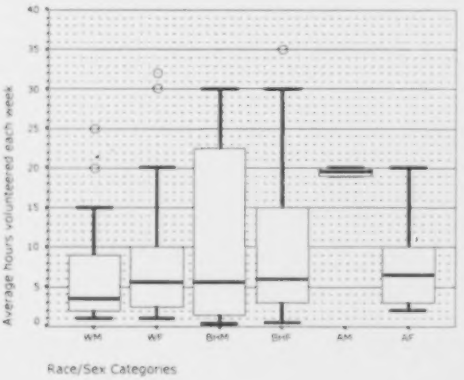


Figure 6. Average hours volunteered each week (by race & sex)



Interaction with faculty

There is fairly clear evidence that African-American and Latino/Chicano students interact with faculty about academic matters more frequently than white males typically do. For example, only about 13% of white males say that they have 'often' discussed term papers or class projects with a faculty member; compared with 21% of African-American and Latino/Chicano males (not shown in tables). Women (both white and non-white) report slightly higher frequencies of such consultation (around 28% saying they have consulted on term papers 'often').

Figure 7. Interaction with faculty scale (by adversity)

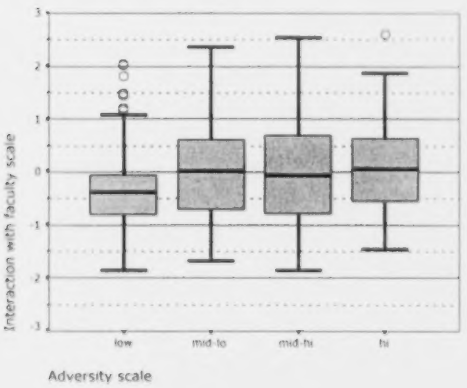
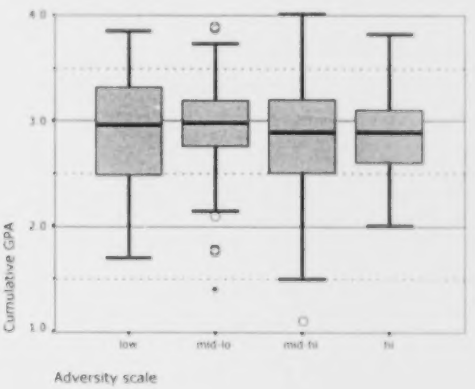


Figure 8. Cumulative GPA (by adversity)



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Figures 7 displays the distributions of an 'interaction with faculty' scale that was created from 10 items assessing various dimensions of contact with faculty. This figure shows that students from more adverse backgrounds report higher levels of contact with faculty. Despite higher levels of intellectual activity and greater contact with faculty, figure 8 shows that, on average, while adversity has little association with one's GPA, students in our sample from more challenged backgrounds tend to exhibit slightly lower GPAs than those from more comfortable backgrounds. Interestingly, this relationship is exactly opposite for white students—that is, those white students from backgrounds of greater adversity tend to have higher GPAs than whites from more backgrounds of greater advantage. This finding is congruent with the work of DeSousa and King (1992) and MacKay and Kuh (1994) who were among the first to challenge the traditional belief that minority students at predominantly white institutions were less engaged in the extra- and co-curricular than whites as a result of a broad cultural alienation.

STUDENTS IN THE NINETIES—SOME PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS

Here is the story we think our data are suggesting: *the students most likely to be disposed to academic values and demands and to make use of the resources available on campus for their own development are today students for whom university attendance involves both sacrifice and risk—students usually regarded as 'disadvantaged' because of race and class backgrounds.* Students who are supported by their parents, unburdened by debt and work demands, and raised by college educated parents are, paradoxically, more likely to be distanced from the values and opportunities provided by the institution.[xviii] From a historical perspective we might say that the old 'collegiate' hedonistic subcultural pattern has returned—and it is largely constituted by white students, particularly white males from relatively advantaged backgrounds.

In earlier eras, the 'collegiate' subculture was opposed by an alternative framework that attracted numbers of relatively advantaged students—the 'intellectual/bohemian' subcultures. In the nineties, however, the most evident subcultural alternatives are constituted by minority students. A distinctive and coherent bohemian/rebel/non-conformist subculture isn't evident (at least at UC Santa Barbara right now). Still, there is a decided division among white students with respect to the intrinsic/instrumentalist dimension and a large proportion of white students (especially those of less advantaged background) are certainly not 'partyers' and are more academically and intellectually motivated. Meanwhile, Asian-American students tend to show still another pattern: they are decidedly not oriented toward 'partying', but they also tend to refrain from contact with faculty, even though academic orientations may be strong in this group.

Our findings about the relative seriousness and academic commitment of minority students also resonate with the past. As Horowitz summarizes, campus 'outsiders' in earlier eras (like the 2nd generation Jewish students of the 20s and 30s) were also likely to be far more eager and committed academically and intellectually than their upper status peers. The student body in the 1990s bears a considerable resemblance to that earlier era when waves of first generation students of immigrant background began to throng to

higher education, and to that post-war moment when waves of returning GIs started to go to college.

If there is a problem today of student 'alienation' and academic 'malintegration' its primary source appears to be in the social world created by a portion of the white male student body.

That world seems to support a political climate that fits current stereotypes about 'angry white males'. The majority of white students have Republican parents, but white women, like non-white students, rarely self-identify as Republican. Some white males with Republican parents move away from their parents' affiliation (as do most of the white women from Republican backgrounds), but most do not. As a result there is a marked statistical difference between white males and all other students with respect to political affiliation (only 17% of white males say they are Democrats and 38% are Republican; nearly one-half of white women identify as Democrats; while the majority of non-white students are Democrats and virtually none say they are Republican).

Party affiliation is not necessarily a central feature of most students' identity, but on many issues of concern to students—particularly those having to do with race matters—the same patterns are observable. There is a consensus among minority students in favor of affirmative action and defense of the rights of immigrants, while white students are split strongly on these issues, with white males preponderantly more conservative than white women (see figures 9 and 10 below).

Figure 9. Support for affirmative action (by race & sex)

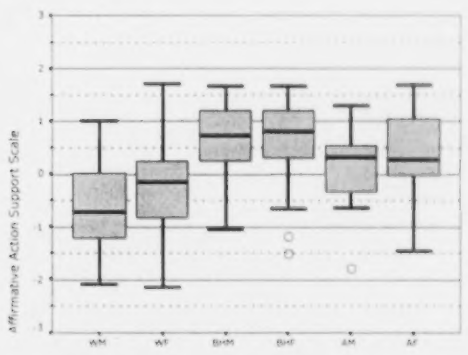
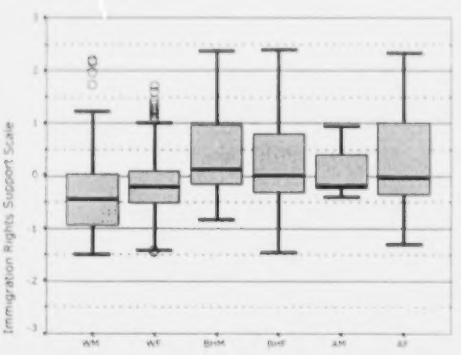


Figure 10. Support for immigration rights (by race & sex)



These findings seem to us the beginning of a story that cries out for further analysis of the data we have, for collecting additional data and for deeper interpretation. Here are some of the lines of further inquiry we now see:

Economic pessimism

The long-standing belief that doing well in school was linked to upward mobility—i.e. that grades really matter—has eroded. Students seem less sure that studying hard and getting good grades will have much to do with their access to higher income or better

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jobs. Students headed for professional and graduate school are still grade-oriented, but what of those who don't have such plans? Most of these students probably don't have the stereotypical 'slacker' perspective attributed to 'Gen X'. But, we argue many find it hard to focus on classes and assignments because the payoff for disciplined study is unclear. Since students, more than ever, believe that the main reason to be in college is to improve their economic and career chances, and because they are likely to doubt that they will have a lot of control over those chances in the face of the economic transformations now going on—confusion and ambivalence about the academic seems widespread.

Threats to advantage and status

Such ambivalence, we hypothesize, is greatest for students whose life chances are largely guaranteed by their family's capital. Our data suggest that these are the students who doubt that they can surpass their parents' standards of living (while working class and minority students have more confidence that they will be upwardly mobile). In the 1960s, students from the upper middle class actively substituted goals of self-fulfillment, free expression and (in some cases) service and social action for material success. In the 1980s, according to at least anecdotal evidence, many students from the upper class joined the general quest for grades, because of growing anxiety about downward mobility. Today's advantaged students by comparison seem aimless. Our survey data provide few clues about how to determine and interpret either the private or shared perspectives of such students. We intend to make use of our depth interview materials and other sources of data to probe further.

If we are seeing the emergence of a 'white male' subculture characterized by heavy drinking, anti-intellectualism and resentment, we certainly have reason to view it as a classic reaction to the rise of women and minorities, exacerbated by the confusion these students are feeling about their own future security and opportunity. But we need also to ask whether such 'alienation' is also fueled by the considerable institutional tendency to attribute to white males a degree of inherent racism, sexism and homophobia. Some white males undoubtedly benefit from and even welcome challenges to their taken-for-granted privilege. Others are confused or angered by the apparent 'essentialism' of such attributions, resenting the assumption that they are necessarily 'racist' or 'sexist' (or assuming themselves that they are being so characterized). Accordingly, we want to explore further the extent to which the emergence of a distinct white male subculture on campus expresses, not only a defense of advantage, but also a resistance to institutional efforts—in both the formal curriculum and in the exertions of the student personnel staff—that they experience as repressive.

Collective and individual identity

Much has been written about the new subcultures of ethnic minority students. This writing, rarely based on empirical investigation, emphasizes that these subcultures are deeply involved with politics of identity—and therefore, intolerant of difference, separatist, divisive—and that minority students are accordingly pressured to conform to fixed collective identities. Such depictions, as stereotypical as those of the 'slackers' and the 'angry white males,' need to be re-examined. It is far more fruitful to understand each

minority student as wrestling with efforts to reconcile and synthesize *both* the moral requirements of collective identity *and* strong needs for individual expression and attainment. Understanding something about how students work through and resolve contradictions between collective and individual identity, between their sense of social responsibility and their desire for individual recognition and status is a key to understanding the current student experience. Our data strongly suggest that students of minority background, students from working class and lower income families, students who are the first in the family to attend college—who are making family and personal sacrifices to be in school—are far less uncertain than their upper middle class peers about the value of a college education. Their aspirations are classic, even if the new economy may be harder to negotiate than that faced by earlier generations of the newly arrived. Unlike previous upwardly mobile immigrant students, today's 'first generation' students may be more conscious of sustaining and fulfilling communal ties and responsibilities, and more likely to define their moves up the ladder as contributions to their communities rather than simply as expressions of self-interest.

Instrumentalism

Our data show that students of all race and class backgrounds define the purposes of college in 'instrumental', 'economistic' terms. Relatively few students say that they are going to college to gain knowledge, or to develop themselves, or to enable them to contribute to social betterment. The prevalence of instrumentalism in the academic outlook of students contributes to a narrowing of students' interest in using the opportunities the institution provides for self-development. The instrumental attitude may be applied to class attendance (why go to class if it won't be on the test); to participation in extracurricular organizational activity and community service; to attendance at non-required concerts, performance events, lectures, museum exhibitions, etc.; to following the news and trying to understand the public happenings and debates of the moment; to developing an interest in non-required reading (or even to reading assigned work).

There is however a difference between the instrumentalism of relatively advantaged students and those from working class or minority background. At least some of the latter see that *expanding one's cultural awareness and social knowledge adds to one's cultural capital.* The instrumentalism of students from minority, immigrant or working class background can stimulate active and even hungry use of the opportunities for mind expansion and consciousness raising that the campus provides (as it did for 2nd generation immigrant students at places like CCNY in the 20s and 30s, and the instrumentally oriented returning GIs after World War II). Instrumentalism among relatively advantaged students, we find, is associated with the anti-intellectualism of the 'party' subculture.

Interaction of economic pessimism and instrumentalism

We suspect, too, that instrumentalism is associated with insecurity about the economic future. Students who believe that they face an uncertain, highly competitive and inhospitable opportunity structure are likely to interpret their college activity as an effort to increase their marketability. This complex of attitudes (which we need to document more fully than we have so far) is related to a complex of socio-economic changes that

have been much discussed and speculated about: the globalization of the economy, and the emergence of a 'postindustrial' structure of occupational opportunities, has led to corporate downsizing, the erosion of professional and technical career ladders, and demand for a work force that is 'flexible' (and therefore willing to adapt to arbitrary disruptions of career paths and expectations.) Students overwhelmingly believe that it will be difficult for them to find vocation that is really fulfilling, and they believe that previous generations of college graduates had an easier time economically than they will have. We want to explore more fully how such attitudes affect the subcultural patterns we have observed.

Some Policy Implications

These tentative findings and working hypotheses will be further refined and tested with the data we have gathered, and another round of data collection we will carry out this year. To the extent that this depiction of the student scene makes sense at the University of California Santa Barbara, and to the extent that it can be generalized to other institutional settings, important implications for educational policy and practice seem to flow from them:

- We should consider assessing the value of the college experience and who benefits from it not simply in terms of quantitative measures of students' performance in classes and on tests, but in terms of their development as members of the culture and the polity. Course grades and cumulative grade point averages are subject to a variety of biases that compromise their utility as effective measures of academic engagement and experience. More likely, traditional academic measures such as these may serve as indicators of the extent to which students can identify and comply with the academic norms and requirements of the college. Students from relatively advantaged backgrounds test well, and know how to maintain B averages (and this applies to many that avoid serious commitment to either their courses or the wider life of the intellectual community). Students of disadvantaged background may not test well and may struggle academically because of poorer pre-college preparation—but these may be among the primary constituencies for more fully benefiting from the chance to be in college. Recent challenges to continued use of the SAT as a primary tool for admissions are accordingly quite timely, since an implication of the story we are telling here is that reliance on such tests may not necessarily recruit the most motivated and most promising young people.
- How can academic commitment and community engagement be fostered in the present climate? Who is likely to be a more committed student: one who is freed from competing demands and can be a student full-time, or one who has to work as well as study? Perhaps campus climate, student involvement and personal development would be enhanced if all students were expected to have some kind of real world responsibility as a part of their daily lives.
- How can the instrumentalism that prevails in student culture be challenged and broadened? The traditional faculty effort to pit an ideal of 'knowledge for its own

sake' against prevailing students' utilitarianism may now amount to futile gesturing. For the institution's own endlessly repeated advertisement is itself largely utilitarian—and this converges with parents' reiterated demands that their offspring pursue practical courses of study that justify the cost. If students today are detached from many of their classes because: a) making the grade can be separated from genuine engagement with the subject matter or ideas being conveyed, or can be accomplished while cutting many corners; or b) the class itself seems instrumentally irrelevant; or c) the class is being taught in ways that are uninvolving—how can such detachment be overcome? The conventional answer seems to be to increase the entertainment value of lecture sessions or increase the effectiveness of testing procedures to prevent corner cutting. There is also a considerable effort to adjust the curriculum to market demands.

Is there a way to attract students to more authentic intellectual engagement? Our data indicate that students across the boundaries that separate them seem to share a desire for voice as students in institutional decisions that affect them. At the same time, we conjecture (but don't yet have data to verify) that students might be challenged by a curriculum and a pedagogy that provided opportunity to find their own voices as individual persons in the vast sea of globalized culture which they have to swim in. Offering students opportunity and resources to gain voice as citizens and as consumers and producers of culture provides a way to connect the 'instrumental' and the 'intellectual' as mutually supportive values.

Where Do We Go From Here?

As indicated, we have additional data to analyze—especially the rich material embodied in the diaries and interviews we collected—and we plan an additional and better formulated survey of UC Santa Barbara, as well as other campuses, during this academic year.

We hope, as a result of these efforts, not only to refine and develop the story we have sketched here, but also to develop materials that can be used at a wide range of campuses. Our ultimate aim is to develop a national network of researchers engaged in parallel efforts to understand the worlds of today's students.

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[1]Comprehensive reviews and bibliography of the research literature on student life and attitudes may be found in Feldman and Newcomb (1969), Altbach and Kelly (1973), Sanford (1962), Pascarella and Terenzini (1991)

[ii] Horowitz (1987).

[iii] See Flacks (1971)

[iv] See Flacks (1967, 1971). Much research supports the finding that student activists in the early 1960s were distinctively from relatively affluent, professional and liberal families. (see Keniston , 1973 for a detailed review of empirical research on 1960s era student protest). By the late 1960s, the demographic composition of the movement increasingly reflected that of the student body as a whole

[v] For a fuller analysis see Flacks, 1971.

[vi] For description of student climate in 1970s see Levine, 1980, and Horowitz , 1987.

[vii] We thank UCSB Dean of Social Sciences Don Zimmerman, the Joseph & Helene Pollock Foundation, the UCSB Academic Senate, the UCSB Vice Chancellor Student Affairs, Michael Young, the UCSB Vice-Chancellor Budget & Planning, Robert Kunz and the UCSB Director of Institutional Research, Dennis Hengstler for various kinds of invaluable support for this study.

[viii] For a particularly simplistic but generally accepted version of these worries see Sacks, P. (1996) . A more balanced view is presented in the September 1997 issue of Harper's Magazine in pieces written by Mark Edmundson (pp. 39-49) and Earl Shorris (pp. 50-59).

[ix] For a summary of the decades of data this survey has produced see Dey, et al. (1991). Unfortunately, the hundreds of thousands of students who take this survey each year are entering freshmen, responding to a survey administered before they have started college. Although press reports of these data usually treat them as if they provided a portrait of college students, they in fact are about pre-college attitudes. However, the items used in these surveys are the best standardized measures of a variety of attitudes now available—and the historical trends in responses to these are instructive.

[x] A technique known as the Diary-Diary-Interview method (Zimmerman & Weider, was employed to collect the qualitative data in our inquiry.

[xi] These data are currently being analyzed by Todd Hechtman, as part of his dissertation research in Sociology at UCSB.

[xii] See Dey (1991).

[xiii] These differences are not surprising to those familiar with the research literature on college students' alcohol use. This work shows consistently that white male students are much more likely to display more abusive drinking patterns (e.g., Douglas, Collins, Warren, Kann, Gold, Clayton, Ross, and Kolbe, 1997; Wechsler, Fulop, Padilla, Lee, and Patrick, 1997; Wechsler, Davenport, Dowdall, Grossman, and Zanakos, 1997)

[xiv] Our definition of 'binge', 3 or more drinks in one sitting, is less stringent than the conventional definition used in much of the literature focusing on drinking in college (5 or more drinks) (e.g., Douglas, Collins, Warren, Kann, Gold, Clayton, Ross, and Kolbe (1997)). Our definition will be adjusted to this standard in subsequent administrations.

[xv] "Box & Whisker" plots such as the one in figure 2 are helpful in understanding both the central tendency and dispersion of a measure. The shaded box depicts the range between the 25th percentile and the 75th percentile. The line in the center of each shaded box identifies the median value (50th percentile). The "Whiskers" on each end of the box represent the top or bottom 25 percent of cases.

[xvi] Despite UCSB's 'party school' reputation, and a very active Greek culture prior to the 1960s, fraternities and sororities today enroll no more than about 12% of the student body, and are viewed with considerable distaste by the majority of students. The proportion of student in our sample who report Greek letter affiliation is comparable (11.7%) to that in the UCSB population.

[xvii] Numerous publications have labeled UCSB a top 'party school.' See for example, Wayne Duvall, "Top 40 Party Colleges," Playboy (January 1987) or Steven Antonoff's The College Finder, 1993.

[xviii]The sweeping conclusions of the preceding paragraph need immediately to be modified as follows: The majority of white students, especially in the upper division, don't identify with the party culture. We haven't yet tried to profile the values, backgrounds and practices of non-'party' white students, nor examined systematically whether a subculture of 'academic/intellectual' students (as distinct from 'vocationally' oriented students) can be discerned and described. Moreover, when we speak, above, of minority students, we are not referring to Asian-Americans. Our sample did not include an adequate number of Asian-American students to permit confident generalization—but we do see some signs that a

considerable number of Asian-American students are dealing with distinctive problems of integration. These problems are not associated with disengagement from the academic, but from the wider community life of the campus.